

**Monongahela National Forest  
Forest Plan Revision**

**DRAFT PLANNING CRITERIA**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The 1982 Planning Regulations (36 CFR 219.12) require that planning criteria be developed as a part of the forest planning process. The planning criteria identified in this document will guide the Forest Plan Revision process for the Monongahela National Forest. It sets the “sideboards” on the revision process and is the foundation for the analysis framework. In simpler terms, the planning criteria answer the following questions:

- What will the revision process include?
- What will the revision process not include?

The FP Revision Core Team developed the planning criteria by answering these questions and by considering 1) laws, policies, and direction, 2) information from public input, management concerns, and resource issues, 3) plans and programs from other agencies, 4) ecological, technical, and economic factors, 5) resource integration and management requirements of the 219 regulations, and 6) the Forest Service Strategic Plan.

**2.0 PLANNING CRITERIA**

**2.1 General**

- In general, the existing Forest Plan will be reviewed for currency (general acceptance). Items not identified as a “need for change” will be carried forward into the revised Forest Plan.
- Minor changes that are narrow in scope and scale, without public concern, widely supported, and considered an improvement or clarification will be made.
- The Forest Plan revision will reflect the management philosophy of the planning period.
- The Forest Plan revision will focus on items that will allow for better decisions.
- The Forest will coordinate with the Regional Office on a regular basis to ensure timelines are met and that the product is acceptable.
- The need for change will be supported by the AMS, public input, and resource assessments.
- All existing Forest Plan amendments will be incorporated into the text of the Forest Plan.

- Law, manual, and handbook direction will not be repeated in the Forest Plan revision; they will be referenced. All existing repetition of law, manual, and handbook direction will be removed from the Forest Plan.
- There is recognition that future amendments and maintenance will be needed after the revision is completed.
- Living documents will be incorporated by reference, as opposed to quoting parts of the documents. For example, threatened and endangered species recovery plans will be referenced instead of directly quoted.
- Issues outside of the decision-making authority will not be addressed.
- The niche statement will be revisited so that the role of the forest is described in terms of special features and challenges.
- The Forest Plan is a communication tool. Every attempt will be made to make it clear and concise.
- Terms and jargon will be defined and then used consistently throughout the revised plan. The glossary will be updated to include a guide to acronyms.
- Opportunity areas will not be brought forward in the revision. Planning units will be based on 5<sup>th</sup> order watershed boundaries.
- The Forest Plan revision process will follow all the requirements identified in the 1982 Planning Regulations (36 CFR 219).
- The Forest Leadership Team will be actively involved through each step of the process by reviewing documents and approving the development of the Forest Plan Revision.

## **2.2 Decisions Made in Forest Planning**

### 2.2.1 Forest-wide multiple use goals and objectives.

- The Forest niche statement will be used to update Forest goals and objectives.
- Forest goals and objectives will be reviewed and updated to reflect ecologically based management principles.

### 2.2.2 Forest-wide management requirements (standards and guidelines).

- Forest-wide standards and guidelines will be reviewed and updated to reflect ecologically based management principles.

- Forest-wide standards and guidelines will be put through a course filter which identifies standards and guidelines that 1) do not address current issues, 2) do not adequately address current issues, 3) are outdated, 4) are not achieving internal goals, or 5) are acceptable as written.

#### 2.2.3 Management area direction (Management Prescriptions)

- New management prescriptions may be developed. For example, a management prescription may be developed for old growth/mature habitat.
- The desired future condition and management area direction will be updated to reflect ecologically based management principles.
- Once management prescriptions (MPs) are updated or established, the MPs will not change between alternatives. Instead, the location of the MPs on the landscape will change.
- A MP will be assigned to all lands that have been acquired and are located outside of the proclamation boundary.
- MP standards and guidelines will be put through a course filter which identifies standards and guidelines that 1) do not address current issues, 2) do not adequately address current issues, 3) are outdated, 4) are not achieving internal goals, or 5) are acceptable as written.

#### 2.2.4 Lands suited and not suited for timber production and set and ASQ.

- A timber suitability assessment will be completed by reviewing existing designations and updating.
- The determination of timber suitability will be completed in accordance with 36 CFR 219.14.
- The ASQ will be determined as a result of the modeling process.

#### 2.2.5 Monitoring and evaluation requirements

- The monitoring plan will be reviewed and updated.
- The monitoring plan will focus on cost-efficient methods.
- Monitoring and evaluation will be scrutinized to ensure that the results of monitoring will allow for better decision-making and will identify need for change in the future.

#### 2.2.6 Evaluation of roadless areas in order to make wilderness recommendations

- The roadless/wilderness evaluation will be completed based on current direction relating to wilderness areas in the eastern United States.
- The analysis will be based on current information in the Forest's GIS library.

### **2.3 Public Involvement**

- A public involvement strategy will be developed and then reviewed/updated regularly.
- Personal relationships will be developed/established with key contacts.
- A newsletter will be developed to reach internal and external publics.
- The public will be engaged throughout the entire process.
- Coordination will occur with other agencies, such as the USFWS, DNR, and EPA.

### **2.4 Inventory and Analysis**

- No data will be assembled or used unless it clearly will help make a better decision.
- The data used for the revision will be frozen on August 18, 2003.
- Acres for the land base data exercise will be supplied from the lands program. GIS acres will be used in the revision analysis.
- GIS will be used to for all maps generated for the revision.
- The Forest will establish a format for map products including color schemes, symbols, etc.
- Maps will be prepared so that they can be reproduced in black and white, if possible.
- Benchmark analyses will be limited to what is required in the 219 regulations.
- SPECTRUM will be used as the basis for modeling the revision.
- "Real world" factor that constrain the Forest's ability to manage will be considered as much as possible.
- FVS will be used for timber growth/yield predictions.
- IMPLAN will be used for the economic analysis using appropriate sources of data, not necessarily all from FS sources.

- The best available data available to the Forest will be used in the revised plan and analysis. The Forest will decide what is considered acceptable data.

## **2.5 Fish and Wildlife**

- The species viability evaluation will be cost effective, efficient, and appropriate to the risk.
- The MIS species list will be updated and limited to include those species that can truly indicate measurable effects of management.
- The cost-effectiveness of monitoring species will be considered when MIS are identified.
- Threatened and endangered species management will not be evaluated in the revision considering the recent threatened and endangered species amendment.
- The revised Forest Plan will not formally list the Regional Forester's sensitive species list.

## **2.6 Soils and Water**

- The 1999 Interim Riparian Guidelines will be reviewed, updated and included in forest-wide and management area standards and guidelines.
- The references to soils in the Forest Plan will be made more general to give maximum flexibility for site-specific analysis.
- Road mitigations will be updated.
- A map that identifies soil erosion risk will be developed.
- A map that identifies soil acidification risk will be developed.
- NRCS-NSGS soils survey will replace the soils survey mapping orders.

## **2.7 Recreation**

- The Scenery Management System will replace Visuals Management System.
- The Social Assessment will be completed in cooperation with West Virginia University.
- The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) mapping will be completed in cooperation with West Virginia University.

- The existing Wild and Scenic River eligibility analysis will be brought forward.
- Management area direction for recreation will be consistent with the ROS classification.

## **2.8 Minerals**

- The existing oil and gas leasing assessment is current and will not be updated in the revision process.

## **2.9 Law Enforcement**

- The law enforcement portion of the Forest Plan will be reviewed, and potentially removed, if it is determined that the direction provided is re-stating law.